

John Caldwell Calhoun to Andrew Jackson, September 8, 1818, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

SECRETARY CALHOUN TO JACKSON.

Department of War, September 8, 1818.

. . . . I concur in the view which you have taken in relation to the importance of Florida, to the effectual peace and security of our Southern frontier, and such, I believe, is the opinion of every member of the administration. In fact, the grounds assumed, are very far from being feeble. St. Marks will be retained until Spain shall be ready to garrison it with a sufficient force; and Fort Gadsden and any other position in East or West Florida within the Indian country, which may be deemed eligible, will be retained so long as there is any danger; which, it is hoped, will afford the desired security. We ought, it is true, never to resort to timid measures to avoid war; but it appears to me, that a certain degree of caution (not from the fear of the Holy Alliance) ought, at this time, to mark our policy. A war with Spain, were it to continue with her alone, and were there no great neutral powers to avail themselves of the opportunity of embarrassing us, would be nothing; but such a war would not continue long without involving other parties, and it certainly would in a few years be an English war. In such a war, I would not fear for the fate of our country; but, certainly, if it can be prudently and honorably avoided for the present, it ought to be. We want time; time to grow, to perfect our fortifications, to enlarge our navy, to replenish our Depots, and pay our debts. I speak to you frankly, knowing your zeal for our country, with whose glory yours is now identified. No one, who has examined my political course, will, I am sure, think that these opinions are influenced by timid council.

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I have the honor to be,